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*Testimony of  
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*Presented to  
The Transportation Committee  
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In Support Of:  
S.B. 427: An Act Concerning The Use Of Hand-Held Mobile Telephones And Mobile Electronic  
Devices By Motor Vehicle Operators

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Senator DeFronzo, Representative Guerrera, and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee, thank you for opportunity to offer testimony in support of Senate Bill 427, An Act Concerning the Use of Hand-Held Mobile Telephones and Mobile Electronic Devices by Motor Vehicle Operators. The primary goal of this bill is to keep our roads safe and to prevent needless tragedies.

We are a mobile society and one that exists in an age of constantly evolving technology. It is technology that allows us to communicate with the speed of light – anytime, anywhere. It saves us time and energy and has totally changed the way many communicate with each other on a day-to-day, minute-by-minute basis. They don't talk, they text or even tweet.

This technology is a profound advancement, but when used irresponsibly it is exceedingly hazardous. Yes, we are a mobile society, but we are one that has become dangerously distracted. Driving should not be an afterthought; it should be the only thought when we get behind the wheel. There are more vehicles on the road than ever before and now, with this technology, more distracted drivers.

This is particularly true of our youngest drivers. Today's teens embrace this technology – they have grown up with it. However, the combination of their inexperience on the road and propensity to text is a disaster waiting to happen. That is why we must act now. It is the very nature of young people to believe in their own immortality. We also know that life can hand us heartbreaking lessons in an instant. It takes an instant to text. It takes an instant to claim a life.

We must send a strong message with this legislation that the state will have a zero tolerance policy when it comes to texting while driving and using hand-held phones. If you are caught texting or using a hand-held cell phone, you pay a fine for the first violation. No second chances, not any more. So many motorists continue to flout existing laws and we've all seen them. They zip past us on the highway or on city streets, talking away on their cell phones pressed to their ears. They put themselves and everyone around them at risk. Tougher penalties and a tougher stance may sound harsh to some, but if they save a life and allow a mother, a father or a child to come home safely at the end of the day, it is worth it.

Similar to SB 35, this bill would add texting to the list of activities that are prohibited for a driver while operating a motor vehicle. In addition to other things, SB 427 provides increased fines for the second and subsequent violations and removes the possibility of a suspension of fine for first-time violators. The bill also proposes an additional fine for violators who simultaneously commit a moving violation. This provision directly correlates to the heightened public safety risk.

I would ask you to consider subjecting drivers of moving school buses containing passengers and drivers younger than 18 years of age to the same increased fines for subsequent violations as other drivers. These drivers should be held to the same standards and subject to the same penalties as all other drivers who violate this section.

In an effort to enhance the safety of all traveling on Connecticut's roads, I urge the Transportation Committee to act favorably on S.B. 427.

Thank you again for the opportunity to offer testimony on this very important public safety issue.